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C O N F I D E N T I A L CASABLANCA 000141

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/MAG AND DRL/NESCA

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TAGS: KDEM MO PGOV PHUM PINS  
SUBJECT: THE CASABLANCA EXCEPTION

REF: A. RABAT 0607  
    1B. RABAT 0517

Classified By: Consul General Millard for reasons 1.4 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Notwithstanding the widely reported Palace machinations, the final composition of the City Council in Morocco's largest city Casablanca consists of a broad political alliance between the Palace-favored Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM) and the Islamist-oriented Party of Justice and Development (PJD) among others. In a July 15 meeting with the Consul General, Mohamed Sajid, Casablanca's newly re-elected mayor downplayed the City's poor turnout rate for the communal elections (the lowest in the country) and speculated that his Constitutional Union Party (UC) might join the government in an expected upcoming reshuffle. End Summary.

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Machinations Stir City Council  
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12. (SBU) In Casablanca, an overnight (and as it turned out, temporary) change of alliance by the newly re-elected mayor, Mohamed Sajid, away from the PJD, saw him form a new alignment with PAM, the Istiqlal Party (PI), the Rally of National Independents (RNI), and the Popular Movement Party (MP). This switch angered the PJD who had won the majority of city council seats and facilitated Sajid's re-election. Independent press reports hinted at the King's behind-the-scenes involvement in scuttling a greater role for PJD in the Mayoral coalition.

13. (SBU) The final composition of Casablanca's City Council includes the PJD, who was successful in gaining two of the top 5 deputy mayoral posts in the council. Sajid told us he is confident in his ability to work within the framework of the City Council's broad alliance, which includes the PJD, PAM, PI, MP, and RNI. The Mayor's optimism appears to stem from the fact that his first and second deputies ) members of the PAM and PJD, respectively - share a personal relationship with each other and Sajid. This situation is likely to foster a workable political environment at the City Council, despite the broader PAM-PJD rivalry in the country.

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The State of Affairs  
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14. (C) Commenting on the overall state of political affairs, Sajid opined that Morocco's national government was fragile. He did not discard the possibility of a government reshuffle in the near future. The Mayor also speculated that his party, the UC, might join the government. In addition, Sajid downplayed the widely-reported political rivalry between the PJD and PAM (reftels), explaining that the fierce competition

was part of the coalition-building process in Morocco.

¶ 15. (SBU) The Mayor added that Casablanca's 29 percent turnout rate for the communal elections (the lowest in the country) was not surprising. He described the elite as generally uninterested in the political process and the majority of urban residents as too preoccupied with work to be bothered with elections. In his opinion, voting at the municipal level should in some way be made mandatory.

¶ 16. (C) Comment: With two of the top five deputy mayoral positions, the PJD is set to have a significant role in Casablanca's City Council. Moreover, Sajid's personal connections with the representatives of the various warring parties may be enough to create a workable city government. At the national level, we anticipate that the UC is likely to join the national government, like the MP did last week. Even though the MP and UC are minuscule, they may be enough to tip the balance of the government's razor thin majority to keep it in power, while the PJD and PAM remain in opposition.

MILLARD